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Government Drops South African Treason Trials

(Capetown) - The South African Government has announced that no further action will be taken against the remaining 61 persons accused in the Republic's celebrated treason trial, and it will not appeal against the acquittal of 28 other defendants by a trial court in Pretoria last March.

Anglican Archdeacon C.T. Wood of Capetown, chairman of the Treason Trial Defence Fund in the Western Province, said the announcement would be received with "immense relief" by many people.

A total of 156 persons was arrested in December, 1956, on charges of plotting against the government whose apartheid policy they opposed. Charges against those who had not been indicted were dropped soon after the start of the trial which cost the government more than \$1,000,000. The Treason Trial Defence Fund, headed by Anglican Archbishop Joost de Blank of Capetown, received about \$600,000 from people in various parts of the world.

In commenting on the release of the last 61 defendants, Archdeacon Wood noted that, for the first time in four years, "the accused can relax and pick up the threads of their old life and seek permanent employment".

EPS, Geneva

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British Catholics Establish Body to Foster Unity

(Liverpool) - The Roman Catholic hierarchy of England and Wales has established a Committee for Fostering Unity Among Christians in England under the chairmanship of Dr. John C. Heenan, the Archbishop of Liverpool.

Observing that "spectacular progress" toward mutual understanding among Christians of different persuasions had been made in recent months, Dr. Heenan said "there is a rapidly growing enthusiasm for this new spirit in which Christians of different denominations want to be friendly towards one another".

"Already the general public and the faithful of all denominations have grasped that the essential thing about this movement is that it is a genuine desire to get to know the other Christian's point of view", he said. "Formerly it was rather a case of Protestant versus Catholic. Now the genuine desire is more to think of what we hold in common."

However, Dr. Heenan warned that it would be unfortunate if Christians began to believe that "one Church is as good as another", since such thinking would lead to indifference on the part of church members.

"Charity, friendship and love between Christians does not mean that doctrinal differences disappear", he stressed. "That is why it is a good thing to have this new committee to guide the work."

In addition to Dr. Heenan, four bishops have been appointed by the hierarchy to serve on the committee. EPS, Geneva

East German Press Attacks Bishop Lilje's TV Remarks

(Hannover) - The East German press has directed sharp criticism at remarks made by Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hannover, in a television interview on the question of whether Christians in the East Zone should actively oppose their government.

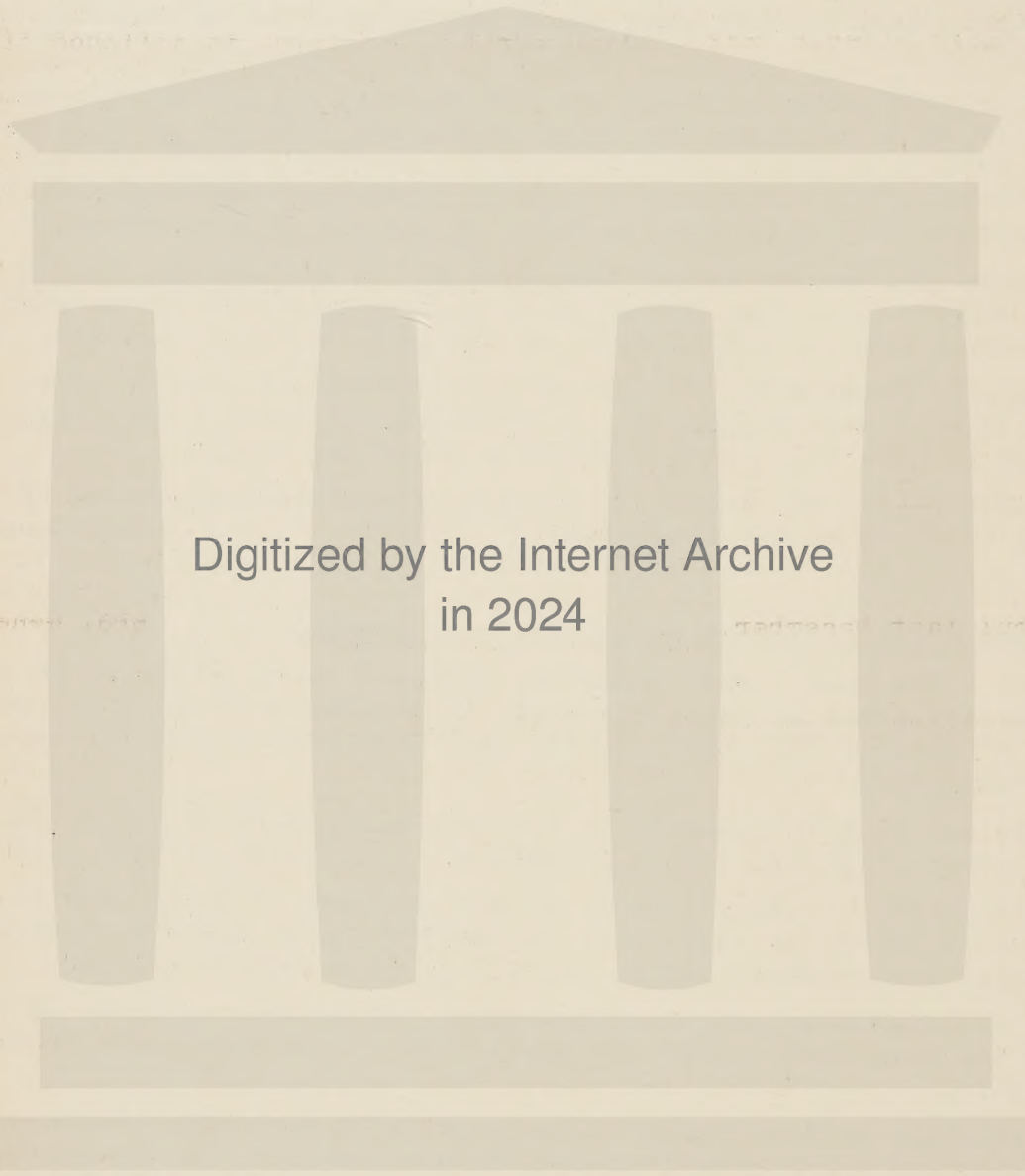
"I do not wish to endanger my brothers over there by simply saying, 'Yes'", Bishop Lilje was quoted as saying. "But that is what I think."

While making it clear that it is not the task of Christians to engage in the use of force, he noted that the difference in basic outlook between Christianity and communism is so sharp that it cannot be bridged.

"In our discussion for instance about the Marxist doctrine of man", he said, "we have found again and again that at one point such things are incompatible."

"Christians will not jump to the conclusion that they should engage in bloodshed and massive resistance", he continued. "On the contrary, Christians will hold to their faith while standing firm. Moreover, at the moment, I would hardly advise anyone rashly to seize a rifle. That would certainly not be a wise or realistic decision."

In reply, East Berlin's Neue Zeit, published by the Christian Democratic Union, branded Bishop Lilje as a "false prophet", and contended that his statement "is a new climax, a non plus ultra, in the misuse of the Christian faith to support the Bonn militarists". The newspaper said further that the statement shows that Bishop Lilje is a "ringleader of the clerical extremists", and that his remarks will force Lutheran theologians in East Germany to indicate where they stand on the issue. EPS, Geneva



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Ecumenical Patriarch Recognizes Bulgarian Patriarchate

(Istanbul) - The Patriarchate of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the election of Metropolitan Cyril in 1953 as Patriarch, which were held arbitrary by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, have now been officially recognized by Athenagoras I, Ecumenical Patriarch and supreme leader of Eastern Orthodoxy.

This decision heals a rift between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Church which began eight years ago when the Bulgarian Holy Synod in Sofia elected Metropolitan Cyril a Patriarch in defiance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Bulgarian Church had been an exarchate subject to the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchs until 1953. Following Cyril's election, which was held anti-canonical, Athenagoras broke off relations with the Bulgarian Church and informed all autocephalous Orthodox Churches that he regarded the creation of the Bulgarian Patriarchate as un-canonical and schismatic.

According to Bishop Emilianos Timiadis, representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch to the World Council of Churches, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has recognized the Bulgarian Patriarch after he had admitted in humility what wrong he had done in 1953 and asked for pardon.

Apostolos Andreas, official organ of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, commented that the Patriarchate decided to grant recognition "as the proto-throne" (i.e. primus inter pares) of all Orthodox churches, wishing that love and accord exist among all sister churches. The Greek Radio has reported that steps to secure the recognition had been initiated by Patriarch Alexei of Moscow, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, during a visit to Istanbul last December. EPS, Geneva

Burma Christians Oppose State Religion Legislation

(Rangoon) - The Burma Christian Council has taken the lead among non-Buddhist groups in the country in opposing government plans to make Buddhism the state religion. The Burmese Parliament is expected to approve legislation establishing the national religion at its forthcoming sessions beginning August 15.

The Council, which is composed of Baptists, Methodists and Anglicans, has gone on record in opposition to establishment of any state religion. It has been joined in its opposition by Muslims who have expressed fear that the legislation would be detrimental to the interests of other religions and could affect the nation's solidarity.

Roman Catholic leaders have made no objection and Hindu leaders have reported they have no comments.

The legislation, in addition to establishing Buddhism as the state religion, would provide for promotion of all religions in Burma with funds in proportion to the size of the religious groups, and would make teaching of Buddhist scripture compulsory for Buddhist students in state-operated schools. Premier U Nu has told leaders of minority religious groups that the bill would not result in discrimination against non-Buddhists.

There are some 6,000 Protestants and more than 177,000 Roman Catholics among Burma's population of 20,250,000. EPS, Geneva

Two New Texts on Atheism Published in Soviet Union

(Moscow) - Two new reference books on atheism have been published in the Soviet Union by Gospolitizdat, the State publishing house for political literature.

Already 100,000 copies of the first book containing 460 pages have been published. It is entitled "Osnovy Nauznovo Ateizma" (Textbook of Scientific Atheism), and was compiled by a team of Soviet scientists for distribution throughout the USSR and other Communist countries.

The book is divided into three parts: the first section deals with the scientific approach to religion and atheism; the second traces the origins and development of religion and criticizes religious doctrines; and the third gives a history of atheism in the USSR and of the government's campaign against religion and the churches.

The second book is a revised edition of an earlier work, entitled "Sputnik Ateista" (The Atheist's Companion), and is similar in content to the other volume. This 500-page book contains several anti-religious caricatures and illustrations taken from exhibits in the Leningrad Museum of History, Religion and Atheism. A total of 180,000 copies has thus far been published.

EPS, Geneva

South African Mission Church Calls for "Amity"

(Johannesburg) - The executive committee of the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church of South Africa, which embraces some 300,000 "Coloured" (mixed racial origin) members, has declared that it is "deeply perturbed" because of deteriorating relations between whites and coloureds in political matters.

A statement issued by the committee called upon its members to remain calm in this "time of crisis" and to obey the law, but it also asked the authorities to remember that "all children of South Africa must be treated fairly and in a Christian way".

Calling upon officials to recognize that the statement was issued as "an honest attempt to stimulate amity, Christian responsibility and co-operation", the committee appealed to members of the Mission Church "to remain worthy of the name Christian", even in the face of opposition.

"We want to assure the people of our church that we, as preachers of the Gospel in the Mission Church, do not stand unsympathetic towards some grievances they may have regarding the treatment they receive as a group", the statement said.

"We admit that some measures not only touch them personally but also cut deeply into their personal, family, social and religious life", it continued. "But we want to impress upon the members of our church that they should adhere to God's teachings and obey them under all circumstances, to be obedient to every human stipulation for Christ's sake - and especially towards the highest government authority."

The statement warned that "reactionary and revolutionary action cannot be approved of because it is un-Christian and contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures and will only divide the white and non-white Christians all the more".

EPS, Geneva

Communist Congress Says USSR "Moslems Must Be Modernized"

(Moscow) - A Communist Party Congress at Mahatchkala in the Caucasus has called upon Moslem leaders in the Soviet Union to "modernize" their religion and "adapt it to Communist ideas".

A report of the Congress published in Voprossy Filosofii, an official party paper, declared that "the aims and ideals of Mohammed have been realised in Communist philosophy".

Survivals of Islam in the Soviet, it said, are "an obstacle to international friendship" and strengthen "the interests of bourgeois nationalists". The Congress resolved to "persecute without mercy (these) survivals" and to "eradicate them".

EPS, Geneva

Growth Reported in Evangelical Movement in Latin America

(Lima, Peru) - Significant progress in the growth of the evangelical movement in Latin America has been reported to the Second Latin American Evangelical Conference.

Dr. T.J. Liggett, president of the Union Theological Seminary, Puerto Rico, told 240 church leaders of some 50 denominations assembled here for the nine-day meeting (July 29 - August 6) that responses to a questionnaire indicate that "judged by traditional criteria ... the last ten years have been marked by great and hopeful achievements".

He said the evangelical community on the continent now has about 9,000,000 members, of whom about half are in Brazil and about 1,000,000 each in Chile and Mexico. He said the reports indicate significant progress in the formation of new congregations, the building of new churches, formation of bible institutes and theological seminaries and stepped-up production of literature. Census figures show about 300 theological seminaries on the entire continent, with Bolivia leading with a total of 17.

Dr. Liggett also reported improvement in interdenominational cooperation. He said most countries now have some type of interdenominational organization, but that effective Christian witness is still seriously hampered by the many divisions which are particularly characteristic of the Latin American church scene.

A second speaker, Dr. José Miguez Bonino, president of the Union Theological Seminary of Buenos Aires, declared that the church in Latin America has failed to make it clear that "the Incarnation means that the church must identify itself with the Latin man, and reveal the meaning of the Kingship of Christ in relation to Latin culture".

Noting that evangelical groups are in the minority on the continent, Dr. Bonino said that, "the proclamation of the Gospel in Latin America means to preach Christ in the face of the Roman Catholic Church. What is important is not our conversation with Roman Catholicism, but Christ's dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. Some people say the Roman Catholic Church can't be changed. When we say that we limit God's power. We are not anti-Catholic, we are not pro-Catholic. We are Protestants and we take advantage of every opportunity to proclaim the message of Christ as love."

A third speaker, Pastor Emilio Castro, of Montevideo, Uruguay, told the meeting that the church must examine closely the kind of influence it should seek to bring to political life. The Evangelical Church, he said, is "guilty of having developed social unrest, but often leaves people with little direction regarding their obedience to Christ. Our job is to keep awakening social unrest...to convert men, bring them into the church and send them into the world as revolutionaries for Christ." (See Special Report this issue.) EPS, Geneva

Prayer For Assembly Asked

(Geneva) - Christians around the world will be asked to pray for the World Council of Churches' Third Assembly on its opening day, Sunday, November 19.

The suggested text of a prayer, which will be sent to local congregations of the WCC's 176 member churches by national councils and other ecumenical bodies, has been released by WCC headquarters here.

The prayer asks in part that Assembly participants coming "from many lands and races" may "meet with one accord in one place" and that "He Who is the true Light may be the light of their worship and their decisions, to the end that in their witness and service and unity Thy people may glorify Thy name in the whole world".

Theme of the Assembly is "Jesus Christ - the Light of the World". Associate themes are "Witness", "Unity" and "Service". EPS, Geneva

Dr. Niemöller Reported "Improving"

(Aabenraa, Denmark) - Dr. Martin Niemöller, West German Evangelical Church leader, was reported "improving" following a car accident that took the lives of his wife and their housekeeper.

Doctors at the Aabenraa city hospital said they have high hopes the 69-year-old clergyman may recover. There had been fear that he might not survive because of a huge loss of blood.

Dr. Niemöller suffered a brain concussion when his small car hit a tree in south Denmark on Monday. The Niemöllers were in Denmark on vacation. His wife, Maria Elisabeth Niemöller, 71, died instantly. The Niemöllers' housekeeper, Mrs. Dorothea Betha Schulz, 47, was fatally injured and died some time after reaching the hospital. A fourth passenger, the Niemöllers' seven-year-old grandson, Martin von Kleewitz, escaped without injuries.

Police said Dr. Niemöller apparently made no attempt to brake or turn before his Volkswagen crashed into the tree. The lack of evidence of brake tracks or skid marks has led them to believe that he fell ill moments before the crash.

Messages of sympathy for Dr. Niemöller, who is president of the Lutheran Church of Hesse-Nassau, West Germany, were reported arriving here from all over the world. They included a message from Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft on behalf of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Niemöller is a member of the WCC's Executive Committee. On Tuesday evening, the day following the accident, the Evangelical Church in Berlin of which he was pastor from 1931 until 1937 when he was arrested for anti Nazi activities and sent to concentration camp, held a special service of intercession. EPS, Geneva

In Brief

Mr. Gabriel Habib, a leader of the Orthodox Youth Movement of Syria and Lebanon, has been appointed to work in the Middle East. He will devote part of his time to youth, as secretary of the Christian Youth Federation of Syria and Lebanon, and part of his time to students, as secretary of the World Student Christian Federation for the Middle East. The appointment was arranged jointly by the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches and the World Student Christian Federation, in consultation with the churches, Christian youth and student groups in the Middle East. Mr. Habib will be based in Beirut.

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The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of South Africa, previously related to the mother church in Germany, has established itself as an independent body to be known as the Lutheran Church in South Africa. The 6,600-member denomination was originally an organized mission of the Lutheran Church of Hannover. It has parishes in the provinces of the Orange Free State and Capetown.

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The 5,000,000-member National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., the nation's largest Negro church body, has made the final payment on Freedom Farm in Somerville, Tennessee, which was purchased to resettle Negro families who had been evicted from their tenant farms last winter, allegedly because they had registered to vote in last November's elections. Dr. J.H. Jackson, convention president, said the 400-acre farm was acquired at a cost of \$60,000 as the first step in a long-range plan to help Negro sharecroppers become prosperous farmers. The property was paid for in six months.

EPS, Geneva

Special ReportConsultation Studies Latin American Scene

(Lima, Peru) - A series of far-ranging reports delineating the social, economic and political issues in Latin America have been issued by the First Evangelical Consultation on Church and Society in Latin America.

Fifty persons, including 42 delegates and eight observers, from 14 countries of the Continent attended the four-day conference July 23 - 27, at Huampani, near Lima, held under auspices of the Departments on Church and Society of the Evangelical Confederations of Churches in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, in co-operation with the Department on Church and Society of the World Council of Churches. The WCC was represented at the meeting by the Rev. Paul Abrecht, executive secretary of its Department on Church and Society. Consultation president was Prof. Miguez Bonino, president of the Union Theological Seminary of Buenos Aires.

The statements, prepared by three "working parties", were received by the consultation in plenary session and issued as its official report.

Speaking on Latin America's social-cultural problems, the Consultation pointed to the "tragic state of social and cultural under-development". This condition, it said, is due "not only to the lack of resources and wrong government planning, but also is the consequence of the feudal system inherited from the colonial period and maintained by oligarchial minorities", and "has been aggravated by certain cultural forces coming from outside". The condition of the indigenous population, the report charged, "in some countries remains a situation of half-slavery.

"The conditions of the masses in the cities instead of being alleviated grow worse," while the rural class remains "the lowest social class in Latin America".

The consultation urged study by the churches in both areas. What is needed, it said, is "true social planning to integrate the indigenous population into civil life". At the same time, the churches should study new ways to promote the dignity of rural work and offer a new evaluation of rural life.

The report on economic conditions, speaking also of conditions in the cities, said they had been made worse by the violent economic upheavals due to industrialization and urbanization. "These urban masses," it declared, "illiterate, lacking the skills necessary for technical employment, ill-housed, ill-fed, and rootless are a kind of forgotten proletariat."

A section on problems of land reform reported that pressures for reform are "mounting daily to the extent that refusal or delay to act, whether due to the ineffectiveness of government or the unwillingness of the ruling classes to make the necessary changes by orderly and constitutional means, will only increase the danger of volcanic solutions."

The statement declared: "The Church has always held that the economic system must not be regarded as an end in itself, but as a means for achieving a just and responsible society. Today, in Latin America, this means that we need an economic system which will maintain a balance between three values - freedom, justice and progress. In the past the emphasis has been mainly on freedom. Today the masses of people are ready to sacrifice freedom in order to achieve justice and progress. It is the responsibility of the Church to recognize these aspirations as legitimate parts of the Christian concern for the human person . . . "

The statement on politics pointed to "the continuing corruption which characterizes most Latin American political regimes", and listed dictatorship and militarism as "the big dangers" of the Latin American political scene.

The nationalism movement is today the basis for the struggle for economic freedom in the Continent, it said, noting that "economic imperialism in our continent has strengthened the concern to achieve our full sovereignty". It added: "Not all imperialism is Yankee; there is another as dangerous, namely Soviet imperialism . . . If it is true that imperialism has corrupted many of our governments, it is because it has found corruptible material. Therefore the solution of the problem is not all on one side".

In concluding sessions the consultation agreed to continue its work through a Latin American Junta (Commission) on Church and Society, to be organized under auspices of the study commissions of the church federations in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Mexico.

It was proposed that the Junta call a second Latin American consultation on church and society in two years, and that in 1962 it sponsor, in co-operation with the North American Committee on Co-operation in Latin America, a "hemispheric discussion to develop a better understanding of the nature of the crisis brought by rapid social change and to assist each other in making a true Christian witness in this situation".

EPS, Geneva